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UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

CHS/90/25
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Reform and Modernize Land-Tenure Systems - UNCHS (Habitat) Executive Director

UNCHS (Habitat) Executive Director has called for the reform and modernization of land-tenure systems in order for governments to deal effectively with current development demands.

The call was made on his behalf by Mr. Darshan Johal, Director, Office of Programme Co-ordination, UNCHS (Habitat) during the official opening of a 4-day (15-18 October 1990) workshop on Land Registration and Land Information Systems for Eastern and Southern African Countries.

Addressing officials form land survey and legal departments, research institutions and land departments, he made reference to the prevailing land-tenure systems in developing countries which he claimed creates barriers to the development of human settlements particularly in urban areas. Lack of documentary evidence of title, or confirmed tenure, he stated, impedes access to formal credit and deters efforts intended to generate resources from property ratings.

Promotion of land-title registration, he continued, is the starting point for land-tenure modernization. Land registration ensures legal security which in turn makes it possible for transactions, investments and credit facilities from formal financial institutions. Above all, dealings in land become easy, inexpensive, fast and secure and increases private investment in housing.

The Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 (GSS) recognized the merits and importance of land-registration in the development of human settlements; it therefore recommended the establishment of efficient land-registration and land information systems. The strategy also called for the introduction of administrative measures and legal reforms to promote land markets.

In his concluding remarks, the Executive Director indicated that the Workshop, convened and sponsored by UNCHS (Habitat), is a contribution to land-tenure modernization efforts. UNCHS (Habitat) is looking forward to advice, based on their valuable experience, on how current practices can be simplified to

facilitate and expedite the land-registration process in the various countries in the eastern and southern African region. Some of the bottlenecks in the land registration process have already been identified. For example, detailed requirements for precise surveys of land parcels for registration, slow production rate of cadastral surveys and the process of issuing titles.

The collective suggestions of participants on how best to deal with these issues and all others pertaining to land-registration and land information systems would be included in the UNCHS (Habitat) publication "Guidelines on the Introduction and Improvement of Land-Registration Systems in Developing Countries".

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UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

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19 October 1990

Global Parliamentarians act on Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000

Meeting at Tokyo, Japan, from 25 to 28 September 1990, the Global Parliamentarians Conference on Human Settlements adopted its Tokyo Declaration on Human Settlements and Development which set forth a programme of action towards the goal of adequate shelter in the framework of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 (GSS).

Over 100 participants from more than 50 countries met to strengthen the role of Parliamentarians with regard to the GSS, learn from each other's experiences in order to better contribute to the living environment in their countries, increase development co-operation in the shelter sector, and expand support for the activities of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS (Habitat)). A major appeal was made towards understanding that conservation of the global environment is difficult without the improvement of the living environment.

After hearing the statements of various dignitaries, including Mr. Toshiki Kaifu, the Prime Minister of Japan, and Dr. Arcot Ramachandran, the Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat), participants discussed major human settlements issues and presented country, subregional and regional reports. They later met in plenary to adopt the Tokyo Declaration on Human Settlements and Development. The Declaration suggested a programme of specific actions and measures to be taken by parliamentarians, governments, donors, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and community-based groups. Chief among them was the need to highlight the human settlements environment in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, and to intensify support for UNCHS (Habitat).

A mechanism for follow-up action was drawn up. It included the establishment of national-level Parliamentary Groups on Habitat and of Regional Committees of Parliamentarians for Habitat, the transmission of the Tokyo Declaration to the United Nations Secretary-General and to the Secretary-General of UNCED -

- with a request that it be brought to the attention of the Preparatory Committee of that Conference, and to the Conference itself. The Tokyo Declaration itself urges all governments to present and/or endorse a resolution in support of the Declaration to the United Nations General Assembly.

TOKYO DECLARATION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT

Preamble

WE, THE PARLIAMENTARIANS from around the world, participants at the Global Parliamentarians' Conference on Human Settlements and Development, held in Tokyo, Japan, from 25 to 28 September 1990 to examine the critical issues of human settlements and development, having so resolved, do hereby adopt the following Declaration:

The Global Parliamentarians' Conference on Human Settlements and Development,

Conscious of the vital importance of human settlements development to national economic and social development and to the welfare of people, especially the poor in developing countries,

Having taken stock of the state of human settlements worldwide and particularly in the developing countries where more than one billion people continue to live in shelters unfit for human habitation,

Deeply concerned that the global urban population is projected to increase from about 1.8 billion in 1980 to nearly 3 billion by the year 2000, with most of that increase taking place in the developing countries, and that this projected massive increase in urban population will not be accompanied by any corresponding increase in the supply of housing, infrastructure and services, thereby further depressing the already precarious living conditions of people, particularly the poor, in such urban areas,

Mindful of the rapid proliferation of slums and squatter settlements, especially in the developing countries, as a result of the lack of access to land and adequate shelter to major segments of national populations,

Recognizing the imperative need for innovative and decisive policies and programmes to address these problems which have become of major global concern,

Recalling the unanimous adoption by Member States of the United Nations of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 contained in General Assembly resolution 43/181 of 20 December 1988,

Encouraged by the steps already taken or being taken in many countries to formulate and implement national shelter strategies and to adopt other measures that will enhance prospects for achievement of the objective of adequate shelter for all,

Aware that despite such efforts more than one billion people, most of them in the developing countries, continue to live in deplorable housing conditions, and that this number will increase dramatically in the near future, partly as a result of current population and urbanization trends,

Understanding that the issue of environmental preservation and resuscitation is critical to the welfare and survival of all peoples in all nations and that sustainable development is an imperative not only of the developed world but also of the developing world.

Recognizing the critical linkages between the human settlements environment - the living and working environment of people - and the natural environment, and as such welcoming the convening by the General Assembly of the United Nations of a United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Brazil in 1992,

Cognizant of the fact that as elected representatives of the people, we have a unique role to play in the development of human settlements not only as law-makers but also as leaders of public opinion at the national and at the local levels,

Recalling the decisions taken at the first, second and third meetings of Global Parliamentarians on Habitat, held respectively in Yokohama, Japan on 30 October 1987, in New Delhi, India on 7 and 8 April 1988 and at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia from 25 to 28 April 1989,

Resolves to work towards achieving the objective of adequate shelter for all within the shortest possible time and in the framework of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, and to that end adopts the following programme of action,

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

A. Action by Parliamentarians

We, the Conference participants,

1. PLEDGE OURSELVES to provide leadership and to support our Governments and people in their efforts towards the development and improvement of human settlements in general, and in particular towards the achievement of the goal of adequate housing and services for all at the national, regional and local levels through formulation and implementation of national shelter strategies and other similar measures;

2. FURTHER PLEDGE OURSELVES to give full support to the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, adopted by the United Nations, and to its "enabling approach" in which Governments are called upon to establish the legislative and institutional framework which would enable the private sector, both formal and informal, to use its resources to supplement national efforts in producing more and better housing;

3. DEDICATE OURSELVES to the following specific actions in support of the implementation, at the national level, of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000;

a) Initiate, support and pass legislation which would lead to the provision of infrastructure required to open up new areas for housing development and to upgrade squatter and other unplanned settlements; introduce and support regulations and standards for housing construction which permit the use of low-cost technologies and local materials;

b) Initiate, support and pass legislation which would mobilize public and private sector finance for housing and related social services especially for the low-income segments of the population;

c) Initiate, support and pass legislation where applicable which would encourage the use of private land for low-income housing development including the simplification and speeding up of administrative and planning procedures for land sub-division and land registration.

4. FURTHER DEDICATE OURSELVES to the support of programmes and measures that will:

a) promote the housing construction industry as a strong vehicle of economic recovery and growth bearing in mind that investments in the construction industry, which tends to be labour-intensive, have substantial multiplier effects as they increase output, income and employment throughout the rest of the economy through the use of inputs from a large number of other industries;

b) support measures that will enhance the legal status of women through, inter alia, the removal of discriminatory legal, cultural and social barriers which militate against equal access by women to housing, land and finance;

c) mobilize the efforts of the poor segments of the population in the construction and improvement of their shelter through community organizations and co-operative societies.

5. DECIDE to work to ensure that Governments highlight the problems of the human settlements environment in the context of the sustainable development at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, and that these concerns are duly reflected in any recommendations emanating from the Conference;

6. ALSO DECIDE to intensify our support for the programmes and activities of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) which has been charged by the United Nations General Assembly with the responsibility of co-ordinating the activities of the United Nations system in the field of human settlements, and specifically, with the responsibility of assisting Governments in their implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000.

B. Action by the International Community

The Global Parliamentarians' Conference on Human Settlements and Development.

7. FURTHER CALLS on all Governments:

- To place a high priority on the development and improvement of human settlements in the national development plans of their respective countries;

- To institute effective co-ordination between public agencies and to facilitate dialogue between these agencies and the private sector both formal and informal, as well as community-based groups in order to determine instruments, mechanisms and incentives which will encourage their active co-operation and involvement in the planning, management and implementation of human settlements programmes within the context of the Global Shelter Strategy;

- To take the necessary steps, whenever possible, to facilitate cooperation between shelter organizations and their respective partners abroad, with due regard to relevant national policies;

- To accord to local government authorities a substantial role and corresponding responsibilities for the management and development of human settlements;

- To strive as a matter of urgency to eliminate, where they still exist, all discriminatory legal, cultural and social barriers to full and equal participation by women in the human settlements development process, bearing in mind not only the need for equality of rights for all citizens but also particularly the decisive roles which women play in determining the quality of family life;

- To make or increase, as may be applicable, voluntary contributions to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, the financial arm of UNCHS (Habitat), so as, in particular, to facilitate the accelerated implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000;

8. URGES donor Governments, multilateral and bi-lateral aid agencies and international and regional financial institutions, including regional development banks;

- To urgently increase significant financial allocation to human settlements development activities in their lending and assistance programmes and to respond more positively to requests from developing countries for assistance in this area, particularly in the context of national efforts to implement the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000;

- To co-ordinate assistance to the human settlements sector with other bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors in order to ensure that the needs of all developing countries are addressed fully, respecting the over-all co-ordinating responsibility and choice of strategy of the recipient countries;

9. FURTHER URGENTLY APPEALS creditor Governments and the relevant financial institutions to consider, in consultation with the concerned developing countries, ways and means of providing effective relief to those countries from their debt burden, which has seriously undermined their ability to carry out much-needed development activities, including especially activities perceived to have no immediate appreciable financial returns, such as those to improve the living conditions of the poorer segments of society;

10. ALSO URGES the organized private sector, non-governmental organizations, civic and voluntary organizations and other community-based groups, including co-operatives;

- To give increased emphasis in their activities to housing issues, and to that end to expand their programmes and projects for improving access to housing, infrastructure and related services to low-income groups, particularly the poor in urban slums and rural settlements;

- To devote special attention in their work to the needs of vulnerable groups such as women and children, bearing in mind that they are especially well-placed to reach these target groups.

MECHANISMS FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

The Global Parliamentarians' Conference on Human Settlements and Development.

Conscious of the need for specific mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of the Programme of Action contained in the Tokyo Declaration on Human Settlements and Development;

Aware of the need to mobilize support for and to keep human settlements issues at the fore-front of national, regional and global attention;

1. Invites Parliamentarians world-wide to establish "Parliamentary Groups on Habitat" at the national level with, inter alia, the following objectives:

a) To co-ordinate the implementation at the national level of the Programme of Action of the Tokyo Declaration on Human Settlements and Development,

b) To enhance the political commitment and financial support of Governments to the development and improvement of human settlements at the national level, and

c) To provide support to human settlements issues during their discussions in national Parliaments and other national fora.

2. Further invites Parliamentarians world-wide to establish "Regional Committees of Parliamentarians For Habitat" at the continental levels with, inter alia, the following objectives:

a) To support the activities of "Parliamentary Groups for Habitat" at the national level;

b) Promote collaboration among the national "Parliamentary Groups for Habitat" through the exchange of information and experiences gained in the implementation of the Tokyo Declaration on Human Settlements and Development;

3. Urges the speakers and Chairmen of national Parliaments to facilitate the representation of their respective Parliaments at the biennial meetings of Global Parliamentarians which take place in conjunction with the sessions of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements, the next session of which is scheduled to take place in Harare, Zimbabwe, from 29 April to 8 May 1991;

4. Calls on Governments to support the activities of Parliamentarian Groups and Committees on Habitat at the national, regional and global levels so as to enable them to better supplement national and international efforts in this important field;

5. Requests the Chairperson of the Global Parliamentarians' Group to transmit the Tokyo Declaration on Human Settlements and Development to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) with a request that the Declaration be brought to the attention of the Preparatory Committee of the Conference and, in due course, the Conference itself.

6. Further Urges all Governments to present and/or endorse a resolution in support of the "Tokyo Declaration" to the United Nations General Assembly.